



AYYA KHEMA RETREAT

GERMANY 1995

Summaries

Part 1 & 2

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MEDITATION - AN OVERALL EXPLANATION

From Talk 01a

Paths to Practice

Inner anxiety draws us to Meditation whether we know it or not. Everyone who is unenlightened has this 'inner anxiety.' We don't always know we have it until something triggers it off, and we then tend to blame 'external forces.' *Our Spiritual path starts when we know that it is ourselves that are causing our own internal misery.* We must learn to ignore the 'trigger's which are innumerable, ever changing and difficult to control. However we are quite capable of learning to control and change ourselves. This does not mean self suppression and blame, but learning to look inside for the causes, without judgement, and to then do something about them. ("Recognition, No-Blame, Change")

When Practice is done wholeheartedly, our horizons widen and our perspectives deepen. As we see the world in a totally different light, anxiety, and many associated problems start to fall away.

Supports to Practice

Of importance and value in getting full benefit from the Buddhist teachings are: Willpower, Determination, and a Resolve to practice consistently all the time. It is not something you do now and then, only if and when you have the time, or feel the need.

Joy and Gratitude should be brought into the meditation to help 'Open up the Heart.' We need to learn to love what we do when we practice. Meditation itself should also bring joy, but should also be approached with a sense of joy. Having gratitude for the opportunity to practice this 2500 year old tradition and for other good things in our lives, helps generate this joy.

Noble Silence gives us the ability to figure out what is going on within ourselves, without having to contend with the additional distraction of the incessant chatter and opinions of ourselves and others.

Being in The Moment is most supportive. It is devoid of the problems and distractions that 'time based' thinking brings. (The 'Now' contains no, expectation, resistance, comfort seeking, etc.)

Hindrances to Practice

Difficulties, often common to early stages of Practice include:

Doubt and Uncertainty about our ability to meditate, which can be extremely damaging to practice. Try not to think that way and realise that anybody can meditate adequately. Anyone who wants to know can 'know.' It is just a matter of time, effort, application, and a 'growing of the Heart.'

Comparison of ones Practice to that of others also creates distraction and envy.

We really just do not know how well others are meditating and should not care anyhow.

Expectation is another common early hindrance. Thinking of results makes it difficult to attend to the meditation. Meditation approached without any expectation of outcome, is already halfway to concentration and ease.

Heart and Mind

We use both the Heart and Mind for our Practice.

The Mind is the thinking, logical, analytical part, needed for understanding the teachings and their methodology. However Mind is also full of disruptive things that are opposed to Spirituality, making it unable do it adequately all on its own. We also need to 'Listen to the Heart.'

The Heart is the experiential and more difficult part. One needs to be able to open ones Heart sufficiently, love what one is doing, and find what we need within the experiential. The Heart has an 'emotion of devotion' to it. Gratitude in ones Practice also helps bring it forth.

It is important that one finds a method that one likes, as this will help reduce resistance to the Heart opening.

Meditation Methods

We use meditation for two purposes: 1. Peace and Joy, which we find within and which cannot be found outside in the world. 2. Insight, to know ourselves from a viewpoint not available in daily light.

The two main methods used in Vipassana are Calm Mind (Calm Abiding), and Insight (Analytical)

1. Mind Calming Meditation

"Watching the Breath:" Amongst the 40 methods of Buddhist meditation, this is a useful and fundamental method of mind calming.

Reasons to use the breath include: (a) We can't forget about it as it is always there. (b) It means life and is therefore a source of gratitude. (c) It is intrinsically connected to Mind and changes with the mind states.(d) It is always in the 'Moment' and serves to anchor us within the 'Now.'

Method: Basically we mentally closely "watch" and feel the breath as it goes in and out of the nostrils, or if unable to do that, then "watch" the rise and fall of the 'breathing' stomach.

Useful supports to help anchor and watch the breath, especially for newcomers, are:

(a) Counting: Count 'one' on the in breath, and 'two' on the out breath until you

reach 10. Then restart. (b) Mantra: Use a meaningful, preferably two syllable word, that 'flows' with the breath. For example "Love" on the in breath. "Peace" on the out breath. (c) Visualisation: For example, "see" the breath coming in on a soft ocean wave and out again on it's ebb. (Especially if visually inclined.) (d) Detailed Observation: Closely follow the sensation of the breath via the nostrils, at its beginning, at the middle, at its end, and also follow its flow through the body. (Especially for more advance meditators.)

"Walking Meditation" is another form of mind calming. It gives one a break from sitting and helps develop the habit of becoming mindfully attentive to our daily movements.

Method: Walk back and forth along a path 20-25m long, noting where one stops and starts. Eyes are open and looking at the ground in front of the feet. Hands clasped behind back or in front.

It consists of a slow six point set of movements: Step 1. Lift the heel. Step 2. Lift whole foot. Step 3. Move foot forward. Step 5. Put foot down on the heel. Step 6. Put down ball of foot.

If there are distracting thoughts, stand still until they dissipate, then continue. This process gradually becomes more mechanical and slower over time.

2. Insight Meditation

Labelling

One method is to 'label' the content of disrupting thought. Recognise and label the thoughts as e.g. "planning," fantasising," "nonsense," "worry," "anger" etc. This is done using the very first label to come to mind.

Labelling the contents of one thoughts helps us get to know our minds. It also leads to the possibility of replacing the identified unwholesome thought, with one that is more wholesome and positive. This ability can make all the difference in coping with our daily life.

Labelling is a way to get to know our repetitive unwholesome thought patterns, which need to be changed and let go of. This is not only done in meditation but carried on into our daily life.

Once we identify the unwholesome thought we then let it go of and "substitute the negative with the opposite and pleasant." This is not always an easy process. We may try to "love" someone we hate, by thinking of and even saying this, but to feel it can be so difficult. This needs practice and effort, but is worth it to get the mind at ease again.

This slowly begins to create peacefulness for you, those around you, and also makes for a smoother Meditation Practice.

Integrated Within

All human minds want to be happy and have true inner peace but the world does

not genuinely provide this. It is only achieved from deep within oneself. The Spiritual journey is a journey within. Any human mind can do this Practice. It's just a matter of motivation and application.

This inner peace does not occur by accident but happens when meditation comes together, and within a total support system. A complete integrated Spiritual discipline is needed or else it will never fully happen. What is often forgotten or even not considered, particularly in the West, is that the Practice needs all "three legs" of the teachings: *Concentration, Insight and Purification*. This complete "purification system of Heart and Mind" generates self confidence, contentment and also provides a very good look at what is actually going on within oneself.

The Steps of the Mind

The texts mention a sequence of 89 steps, however we only need remember and examine 4 of these. 1.Touch contact. 2.Feeling 3.Labelling 4.Reaction

Desire Example:

Touch Contact: We see a shape, colour and smell scent. Feeling: It is Pleasant_ Labelling: 'A beautiful rare Rose.' Reaction: "I want this Rose now and always." I steal it from the garden. Make plans to get the seeds. When it wilts I get sad. Etc.

Aversion Example:

When sitting in meditation for long periods, we often get physical pain and discomfort. For example in our limbs.

Touch Contact: The physical contact of the limb with the floor. Feeling: 'Hurting.' Labelling: 'Awful, unpleasant.' Reaction: "I want to go home." "This pain is unhealthy." "I cannot take it any longer." We can end up with a whole lot of complicated often unnecessary thoughts, which arise around the initial object.

When working with the 4 Mind Steps. firstly don't react impulsively, and secondly don't just sit and suffer with the issue either. The Buddha's path is the "Middle Way." Not extremes. Get back to the initial happening, the 'Touch contact' and work from there. We should be totally aware of this sequence because it is a sequence we use in every day life. Get to know these Steps of the Mind.

To make a change, if needed, and to learn to let go, we try to stop at 'Feeling' before 'Labelling.' In this we need insight into Dukkha and an understanding of these 4 Steps. It is a long term process of recognition and practice, but eventually leads to the reduction and stopping of troublesome craving and aversion. Insight into the way our mind works is extremely relieving, because we realise immediately that everybody's mind works like this.

All in the Mind

Our senses don't have the 'Feelings,' the 'Labels' or the 'Reactions.' It is all in the

Mind. There is no way we can 'see or hear' anything unless the Mind can "say" what it is we see or hear. For example, one person listening to the sound of bells, will have a pleasant feeling, label it 'pleasant', and want to listen to more. Another will label it 'unpleasant' and wish it were all over. Our perceptions are based on memory, background and circumstances.

The Two Arrows

In difficulties, an unenlightened person gets "shot by two arrows." These two "arrows" are the reactions of the body. (The first arrow) and the mind. (The second arrow).

The "first arrow" is unavoidable and can be physical pain, psychological issues etc. However the "second arrow," which is the often irrelevant, mental reaction to all this, can with Practice, be avoided.

An enlightened being still receives the "first arrow" but no longer the second. We need realise that our unenlightened state is but a part of being human, and recognise that it is not the ultimate state of being.

To know our minds and see how they operate is an enormously helpful way of insight. Even though we may not yet be able to change or stop the reactions and labelling, this will come with practice.

Eventually it becomes possible to "*smile at the antics of the mind,*" both in and out of meditation.

Pain in Meditation:

Drop the reaction, get back to the breath, and try changing position slightly, but don't just sit there, gritting your teeth in agony. We need realise that in meditation we've got nothing to prove. We're there, "*not to prove ourselves, but to recognise ourselves.*"

It does not matter how we meditate, if we need to, use a chair, get up and stretch etc. It is important however, not to be negative in meditation.

Joy and Meditation

Joy is a precondition for meditation which should not be approached with gloom, but with anything we can recognise as being joyful. Even the opportunity to practice can be seen with Gratitude.

With this, we gain ease, flexibility, variability and lightness of being which also leads to ease and joy in our practice where we can let go and fall into what is there at the moment. The attitude of 'gratitude of being' without wanting anything, helps to aid and give rise to Meditation.



The Path of the Aspiring Meditator?

This beautiful Painting was taken from a wall mural in a Tibetan Monastery. Artist unknown

At the bottom you see a new monk whose mind wanders so much in its own directions that it resembles a muddy elephant led by a naughty monkey. The monk is running after it.

- Half-way up, his mind, the elephant, has been partly cleaned up and it is the monk who is now leading it – though the monkey is still interfering by pulling the elephant’s tail from behind.
- Further up, the elephant is now clean and the monk alone is in charge – he is saying goodbye to the monkey.
- Next the monk can get the elephant to lie down and finally he can ride it.
- At the top the monk is fully in charge of the elephant, his mind, and is now riding down to put its powers to good use.

Description provided courtesy of Norbulingka Institute

PATH OF PURIFICATION

From Talks 01b,01c, 01d, 02a, 02b

Contemplation

Unlike our usual discursive thinking, which jumps from one subject to the next, contemplation stays with the subject, and is regarded as a "Path of Purification." Using this method, we get to know ourselves internally, and of that which "triggers" us off. We then attempt to 'let go of.' these internal 'triggers.' This is much more workable than constantly and often fruitlessly, trying to change the ever changing, 'outer triggers' in the world around us.

In contemplation it is extremely helpful to ask questions of oneself. The answers we find are usually yet more questions. Although the bottom line answer is "Ego," intellectual realisation of this is not adequate. We have to actually find, know and experience that answer, through an experiential path. Once that occurs letting go becomes increasingly easier.

When the mind starts its usual flights of fantasy, just bring it back, as we do in meditation, to the contemplation sentence. If mind cannot find what it's looking for, look again and again. If we are "triggered" by something it must still be in there, no matter how well hidden.

The Path to Peace

Many have thought they had the solution to the troubles of the world, only to find them fail years later. The final solution lies not externally, but by looking deep within our own heart.

There is so much in the world we would 'like to have, to know and to be' but they all ultimately create anxiety. This dichotomy of 'wanting to have or wanting to get rid of' are the two causes for all our problems. This simple explanation, however has not a simple solution, and this requires motivation and effort.

Letting Go again and again, is a key word on a Spiritual path. Easing up the need to hang onto or get rid of, brings real peace.

This bears no relationship to inactivity, giving up, or of condoning bad things, but is a letting go of often unrealistic 'result thinking', and allowing the heart and mind to rest in peace without trying to gain something. Just as we deal with distractions in meditation, we also learn to do this in the 'real world.'

Enormous Responsibility

We all participate with, breath with, and feel together. Indirectly or directly, we each have a significant effect on the world and others around us. This is an enormous responsibility for each of us. A simple example can be seen how an angry, miserable person, or conversely a cheerful person, can effect an entire group they're with.

When a person finds full or partial inner peace, that person will radiate this peace around them and even further out to the environment.

We should never entertain the 'wrong view' that there is "little can I do all on my own," or that of "trying to help the world, but without helping ourselves first." Although we do meditate and contemplate for ourselves, the end result benefits not only us, but all around us.

Most people try to 'think up their' lives, but actually it is our feelings and emotions that guide us. It is not so much what we say, but what we are and what we do, that are the most effectual.

Generally many who come to this path have already been led there by enough preconditioning from past karma and purification, to already make it happen. Purification is not beyond our abilities. Motivation, effort, patience and steady application is what is needed.

Just let it happen and the results "flower" like a flower unfolding. Practice provides the conditions, the "fertiliser, sunshine, and water," within which this growth is able to occur.

Happiness - Conventional & Pure

Conventional Happiness

In our search for happiness we constantly look externally, becoming anxious and overly busy in our quest for the ideal 'sense contact' to make us happy. These 'sense contacts,' including our circular thought processes, can be most disturbing to our peace of mind.

This brings a form of usually only temporary, happiness. It has a changeable nature, and is a "moving target" which we depend upon, and constantly search for. This according to the Buddha is the '*Lowest Grade of Happiness.*'

There is no guarantee at birth that we're going to have continuous pleasure. (Otherwise for example, constant eating of chocolate cake would always keep us happy and our body will always stay young!) Pleasant/unpleasant situations can vary with individuals, however the ratio generally works out at 50/50.

'Pure' Happiness

True happiness is something found deep within and is more enduring than conventional happiness. Most who don't practice a spiritual path never realise or think of this. With Meditation and Spiritual Practice, we gradually access this form of happiness which with practice can be found, even in times of great distress. Practice leads to inner calm and peace, helping us realise how dependent we have been upon the changeable 'sense contacts.' Whilst treading the spiritual path we still encounter these 'sense contacts,' but we now grow to understand their fleeting nature, and no longer take them for granted.

Love - Conventional & Pure

Conventional Love

This is what we traditionally regard as love. It can bring periods of joy and passion, but is also fraught with numerous difficulties which arise from its very nature. It has the following characteristics.

It is Conditional

The quality and ability for a deeper, 'Pure Love,' is in everyone, but the problem is we want love conditionally. We want to be loved, but only then do we consent to love the other. To make matters worse we put this love on a comparison scale, growing anxious when love is not returned in kind.

This type of conditional love is impure as it is beset with the opposite of a pure heart quality.

It is always Needed

We always want to have the other available. This is often not possible. People change their minds and hearts, our "ideal person" may be unavailable, can be lost to death, move away etc.

It is Dependent

With this impure love, we are dependent upon the emotions and approval of others. We change from being our true selves, to someone we may not want to be, just to be acceptable. This can be extremely unpleasant, block all spiritual progress, and can lead us into a stressful dichotomy of conflict, all because we want to be loved.

When we lose someone or can't find that 'ideal partner,' or the partner we have does not fill our ideal, we then assume that we, and they, are no longer lovable. This means that out of the 6 billion on the planet, we choose and are dependent upon, just 1, 2 or 3 people, and if we can't have them we then can't love. This is absurd.

Just choosing those we only want to love makes life complicated, especially if we've already made up our minds what they're going to be like! We are fettered by our wish to get something and to keep it. However there is no way we can keep anything. All will go on death, and even before that. This fear of loss is often subconscious. If we recognise it, we will also recognise that fear is related to hate, and we hate the idea of the possibility of loss.

Clinging to one or a few people who are supposed to return ones love, can when things don't go as expected, become one of the most anxiety producing emotions we can have.

Pure Love

This kind of unconditional Love which one might call Pure Love, is very rare amongst people.

A reason why we haven't heard and learned about it, is that many institutions teach us how to use the Mind, but not the Heart. This leads to an 'Impure' form of love which can make our whole inner being anxious and fearful, making it much more difficult to be peaceful and joyous.

We don't need anybody in order to engage in Pure Love. With practice, as we learn to let go of the things opposed to our spiritual growth, such as clinging, fear, the hanging on, this 'Pure Love' starts shining through. In long term relationships, if wisdom is allowed to grow, this can become a natural progression of conventional love.

Once we give up trying, the remedy becomes simple. Instead of searching for and hoping to love, rather turn to loving ourselves and others, without any expectation.

"Simple things often escape us as we have convoluted minds."- Buddha

The Supreme Emotions

According to the Buddha, what he calls The Supreme Emotions, are the only ones worth having. These are: 1. Loving kindness, 2. Compassion, 3. Joy with Others and 4 Equanimity. In this Text the first three are covered with Equanimity to be dealt with at a later stage.

These contain the positive emotions such as, gratitude, trust, devotion, respect and reverence. Anything where the heart opens up and tries to give itself to something or someone else. Most common difficulties are with people, and this is where we practice.

1.Loving Kindness

This Practice needs to be firstly for oneself and only then, for all other beings. Just as we cannot give a beggar money if we've made none, if we've not accomplished this within ourselves first, we cannot possibly extend it to others.

Enmity Without and Within

Translated from the Pali, where words are chosen for their rhythm, 'Enmity' entails all negative thinking, for whatever reason. Our prejudices, dislikes opinions, angers, are all the beginnings of being an "enemy," and destroying peacefulness within and without.

It becomes an "inner war"and it follows that this is how outer wars come about.

This war doesn't start on the battlefield, but starts in our hearts, and has been going on for thousands of years.

Totally peacefulness is difficult to achieve, but this contemplation is a way to make and find this peace.

"Happiness and peacefulness are not our birthright. Those who have it, have worked hard to achieve it." Ramalhashi

We can keep what we find within to ourselves, (most are not interested anyhow:), but we need to get to know intimately our own likes, dislikes, angers, fears etc. and our justifications for them.

We need ask questions such as..."Have I hurt any living being, with thought and deed? What do we do to others? What do we say to others? Are we letting go of the idea that these wrong actions are justified? Do we realise that it is useless to blame the 'trigger?' Can we see us blaming the 'trigger?' Can we stop this blaming of the 'trigger?" (The latter is a very important aspect of spirituality.)

We ask questions such as. "What do I do with my dukkha? How do I handle it? Do I blame others for it? Do I look for distraction from it?" The main questions to consider is. "Am I busy abolishing dukkha, and is it abolished yet?"

To Protect my own Happiness

Questions to ask include..."Am I dependent on outside things for my own happiness? How can I protect this happiness if it is dependent on changeable people, impermanent outside influences?"

I can only truly protect it if I can help it grow, and be independent of external conditions. Ask..."How do I do that?"

All these questions need asking. Only what we can answer for ourselves makes a real impact. How much can we actually see within? We don't see all initially but we can make a start.

It all takes personal honesty, internal enquiry and an understanding of interconnections and happenings.

Difficult People

Every person that comes into our field becomes a meditation subject. We often have an instinctive and impulsive good/bad reaction to others we make contact with, possibly due to karmic influences.

It helps to treat difficult people as a Meditation. Sometimes it is very easy to love certain people, such as those who are loving, kind, children and the like, but how about those that are none of these? When we are blamed and criticised by them? When they do bad things to us and others?

They can make us feel very uncomfortable. However when we respond with

unconditional love, the situation can improve. An atmosphere of love around makes it easier for the other to be more pleasant, if not loving themselves.

"Seek out the difficult people. They are your best teachers."

- Tibetan Buddhist saying

It helps to know that there isn't a single person alive who does not have dukkha. We're all in the same boat together. We also need remember to...*"Not approve of the crime, but still love the criminal."* The Buddha teaches. *"Don't look to be loved, you do the loving."*

What we have to do is try to love now and if we struggle, at least practice and even pretend at it.

All we can do is recognise that love is a *"quality of the heart, not a relationship."* As long as we know that, we will be interested to allow that heart quality to grow in us, and provide the right and best possible inner conditions for this growth to occur.

We do this by remembering over and over, and practising with everybody. This will not work all the time, but will work some of the time. When we can see that it is working because we made it work, we become encouraged and realise how important this Practice is to the well being of ourselves and others.

Loving Kindness Meditation

Loving kindness meditation purifies the heart, leading to less negativity and rejection, which makes other kinds of meditation so much easier. It is a way of working with our emotions, without any special courses or psychologists needed. We practice this both on the cushion and off.

This method is reflective of the determination to have a real love for, and an ability to attend to, our own well being. The results will not only benefit ourselves, but also filter out to those around us.

This consists of making Affirmations, for yourself and others, and then Meditating and applying Contemplative Questions to them. The procedure is then repeated for each Affirmation.

It is a good idea to use this once a day. One can contemplate all four, or just pick one for the day. N.B. Start every meditation and contemplation with Loving Kindness for yourself. "I'm my own best friend."

To be Contemplated: Freedom from Enmity, Hurtfulness, Troubles of Mind and Body and How to Protect one's own Happiness.

In these contemplations it is very important to be totally honest about ourselves, to ourselves.

"May I be free from Enmity."

Look deep within for signs of negativity arising in the heart, such as enmity, rejection and aversion.

Once found, ascertain if what we find is wholesome or useful, brings unhappiness or not, and if it will be better if it is changed.

Ask. "Why does it arise and how can I change it? When you see the reasons for this negativity you will also see the remedy.

"May I be free from Hurtfulness."

No special place is needed to experience and practice this. This comes up in everyday life.

"May I be free from Troubles of Mind and Body."

Look and see whether we have any of these troubles (dhuka) and see if we can let them go.

Ask. "What could I let go of to ensure that those troubles will go?" In this regard, do we have enough wisdom, friendship, and love for ourselves, to pay real attention to our own well being?

"May I be able to Protect my own Happiness"

Ask. "What is my own happiness? Does it depend upon outer conditions and people, and does that dependency create anxiety and fear of loss? What is my true happiness? Can I actually find it within? If I can, what does it mean to protect it?"

"May all beings be free from Enmity."

Having seen within ourselves that enmity causes unhappiness, and that we don't want it, we then wish the same for everyone else. In our togetherness, we realise that our own peace and joy needs to go together with love and care for others.

Ask. "If I have found the way to overcome enmity in my own heart will I be able to share it?" Our love and care for others can arise in our wish for their happiness, and then be reflected back to us.

"May all beings be free from Hurtfulness"

Realise that hurtfulness in ourselves also becomes hurtful for others. Just as we are trying to remove this negativity within ourselves, we must also wish for the lack of it in all other beings.

"May all beings be free from Troubles of Mind and Body."

This wish is based on the understanding that there are no beings who are without troubles. This is part of existence. As we wish ourselves not to have troubles, we also wish others to also tread the path that eliminates all trouble. We also wish ourselves and others empathy and compassion.

"May all beings be able to protect their own Happiness"

This tells us that we must never disrupt another's happiness, whatever they think it may be. Just as we want our own happiness to be protected and independent of

outer conditions, so we wish the same for others.

2. Compassion

"Compassion has the overall description of being, not so much our feeling for, but more our feeling with, others." Intellectually we may be aware of the suffering of others, but do we actually 'feel with them?'

Compassion with its strong element of Empathy, is one of the important practices to help us grow within ourselves, and with others.

Compassion versus Pity

The 'Far Enemy' of Compassion is Cruelty which is easy to see, but the 'Near Enemy,' Pity, is much harder to notice.

Pity, being "just sorry for but not with," someone, actually increases separation between us and others. Underlying pity are notions such as. "I'm really sorry that person is not all right. (But..."How fortunate it is that I'm all right.") Without the 'with' feeling, pity is not going to have a purifying effect in our Practice.

Establishing Compassion

Compassion usually does not come by itself, and a fair amount of preparation and effort is needed.

The first step is usually to become aware of our own Dukkha, and lack of inner peace, and that this is an inherent quality within us, and making our own bad Kamma. From this then follows the realisation that others have the same internal problems. It is irrelevant whether the others know about it or not, admit it or not, the teachings are here to change us, not only them.

As we grow to understand that the action and speech of another is very much a result of their own internal suffering, it becomes easier to substitute our negative feelings towards that person with Compassion.

With this in mind we become compassionate first to ourselves and then extend it to others. With this awareness we usually do not so easily reject their behaviour. Compassion makes the bond, the "oil in the machine," for smoother interpersonal relations.

An important aspect of Compassion is a lack of 'self centredness.' The more self centred we are, the less Compassion, and the less our relationship with those around us flourishes.

"The greatest gift we can give anyone is the gift of the Dhamma, to show people the way to happiness, but we've first got to find it within ourselves." - Buddha.

Applying Compassion

It is important to realise that we can only help others as much as we've already helped ourselves.

Compassion has different levels. We try to help on whatever level that we are, always remembering that unless we have peace within ourselves first, we cannot transmit. This can be done in many ways, including physical help, skilled help, emotional help, social action, giving ones time etc. Compassion should not just be for humans but also extend to all other living beings as well.

Compassion helps us avoid the trap of ...“Because I don't feel good, I can let it out and everyone around me must also not feel good. “ This does not mean “we all share the sorrow,” but actually leads to an increasingly unpleasant environment, adding to the bad Kamma of both us and others. If we believe the Dukkha is caused by something external to ourselves, we just cannot grow in Compassion, and all our relationships will suffer as a result.

Suppressing and pretending that I am all right and that everything is fine, is also unhelpful and counter productive, to our Practice.

The “Marketplace”

What is termed the “Marketplace” is the 'hurly burly' of the “real world,” which is connected with 'profit & loss' and all the difficulties of other people. This is usually the place of our every day conciousness, and we're we're easily influenced by all its demands. However it is also an ideal place where we can grow our Practice, and in time we begin to find it easier to become independent thinkers, and less under the influence of it.

We need always need remember that the “Marketplace” has the mentality “that wants to get,” is concerned with the 'Material', and is trying, often fruitlessly, to find a sure footing for Ego based wishes. On the other hand, the Spiritual Path has the mentality that “Wants to Grow, and is concerned with the “Immaterial.” We need to change a bit of our approach when encountering this world, using a different inner growth goal to transcend its influences.

In the “Marketplace,” for example, helping others without any remuneration, is not considered a profitable thing to do, but on a Spiritual level it is an excellent learning situation.

Having Compassion for others does not necessarily mean it will be returned. However it is not about the other person, but about *our own internal growth*. Interestingly the more of our Love and Compassion we have, the more we can give, and *the more we give away, the more we find we have within us*.

The Value of Dukkha

Knowing one has Dukkha is not a cause for concern or sadness. We grow to realise that anything that happens to us is not caused by something else, is just a

part of life, and always gives us another learning situation in our our growth towards true Peace and Joy.

Moody, depressed, anxious, people have a more difficult pathway, but a much greater incentive to practice in order to escape their misery. However those who always seem joyful and happy lack the incentive to practice. They face "falling through one future hoop after another," for decades, only to realise one day that they still have not found what they're looking for. They also find that when things eventually do fall apart they have little foundation to fall back upon.

Both need Compassion. One because they are unhappy and the other because they don't practice!

3. Joy with Others

To have Joy for another's good fortune, is somewhat rare in our culture and society. Yet it is such a simple and effective way to grow Joy in one's own Heart. With this approach we can multiply our own Joy, and in so doing multiply, the Joy in the world. The easiest way to feel appreciation is to give it too others. This is not done by flattery, but is done with honesty, on a positive and joyous level.

We are all participants, interacting with everything there is, and not as we think, just observers in the world. As we find this out it becomes easier to be responsible for our own emotions and output.

Joy with others reduces the egocentricity arising from us being joyful only if something good happens to ourselves, but not others. It also reduces envy and ill will, making us aware that the happiness of others is just as much our responsibility, as it is for ourselves. This is the 'Path of Practice' and hard work.

Much of the Buddha's terms and terminology, seem obvious and simple, but are not quite as simple on the actual, experiential Path of Emotional Purification. "Love thy neighbour as thyself" is ages old,..but the only thing new about it would be, if someone actually did it! Our intelligent, trained minds, overlook this, and we really need a 'Trained Heart', which only arises from Practice.



BRC Buddha – As painted by Tessa

THE FIVE DAILY RECOLLECTIONS - DEATH

From Talks 02d,02e,02f

The first to be Contemplated are Decay, Disease, Death and Kamma

These should be recollected and contemplated daily, and include, life threatening disease as well as lesser ailments. If resistance comes up, then it is all the more important to do them. *People often overlook these, only turning to them when tragedy strikes.*

Contemplation looks within, at the deeper parts of ourselves. From this, Insight and Emotional Purification arise, leading to an easier life. We can use these contemplations at a worldly level, because the body that is decaying is on this level. We also see this on a more subtle level, and in so doing realise that; *"whatever is born must die."*

Death a Law of Nature

The body, like all material things, eventually disappears, as do houses, mountains, and stars. We see starlight that has taken billions of years to reach us, however many of these stars have already long gone! *Therefore, why should WE not also deteriorate and disappear?*

We need to contemplate our own death every day. Many Spiritual traditions want this of us.

We have this strange habit of trying to go against or beyond the certain Laws of Nature. Nothing good comes of it. We need to come to terms with death in a way that makes it a natural passage.

Most people are set against this natural passage, and desperate by whatever means to counteract it. But ultimately we cannot expect otherwise. This is just the way it is.

We have no idea when we or our loved ones will die. Whether we live 20, 30 40 100, 150 years it is all just a "passing show." Would you really like to live 500, 1000 years? ("The thought alone is gruesome!" - Ayya:)

The Buddha's final solution, Nirvana, is embedded within the experience of *Dissolving into the Matrix*, where there is no separation and where Rebirth is no longer necessary.

We must not shy away and stick our heads in the sand, but see all this for what it is. An ongoing natural passage.

In the West death has only being talked about during the last 20 years. We have tried not to talk about it, to each other and especially to the one who is dying. But

the one who is dying, already knows! We cannot keep it a secret, especially from ourselves. 2500 years ago, the Buddha already talked about it daily.

Good Kamma

One thing we can do to make this 'death passage' easier is to avoid things we will later regret. Regret which still clings while one is on the deathbed, makes dying difficult. Try to make good Kamma, when we have the chance, with the intention to live by this and improve on it.

This creates contentment and self assurance in one's passage through life, and into death. It is also good for meditation. Many people have fear of death, because they've not behaved the way they should have in life. This not only makes us afraid to die, but this is further reinforced by what is being taught about death in our culture.

A Life-Death transition by an unenlightened being leads to rebirth. We must remember that the person we know now, is never going to be reborn again. The only thing that gets reborn and re-connects, are 'karmic resultants.' We then reappear here with karmic resultants, but we're not stuck to them. On rebirth, we have new opportunities, which is in our our new 'Kamma making.' We also bring tendencies which includes the 'Craving to Be.' If we did not have this particular tendency we would not get reborn in the first place.

"Kamma is not fate. There are four kinds of people. One gets born in the dark and goes to the dark, another gets born in the dark and goes to the light. Another born is in the light and goes to the dark, another is born in the light and goes to the light". - Buddha - (On good and bad rebirths)

How do we make this 'Good Kamma?'

As a thread running through our lives, be helpful, loving, and giving of oneself. This does not mean just thinking of others without loving ourselves too. When we don't feel for ourselves as well, we cannot feel for others, no matter what we may think we feel.

We should prepare whilst still alive and not leave it to our deathbed, when it may well be too late. By then we may also be physically unable to Practice adequately. Now when we are still functional, is the time to come to terms with our own death.

Day/Night Rebirth Analogy

Ayya gives a good example by comparing birth, life and death, to the day/night cycle.

In the course of a full day and night; we get "reborn" in the morning, when we

are “young and energetic,”and bring with us the joys and tribulations (“karmic resultants”) of yesterday. As the day progresses we make good or bad Kamma until towards evening we get “tired and old” and eventually “die” again, as we fall asleep.

It all starts in the mind. Our thoughts are the instigators of everything that follows. This is why we’ve got to know what we're thinking. Unwholesome thoughts lead to bad Kamma. Wholesome thoughts to good. .

Boundaries of Fear

All these man made boundaries we have created, such as clocks, time, the future, the past, you, me, goals, etc. are useful to get by in the world. However they don't have any true Reality and take us out of the Moment, giving rise to fears and anxieties, and make up the very future we are fearing in the first place! The person who is making up this future, is highly unlikely to be the same one who will experience that future, if and when it does appear.

These boundaries all connect with our 'Ego Support' feelings of, 'not being here,' 'not measuring up,' 'not being appreciated.' This is exactly the same as the fear of 'not being' and losing that “permanent person,” we erroneously think we are. Fear stifles growth and limits that 'spaciousness of mind,' which normally helps us fully accept the new. We've got to learn to let go of this 'Fear for Self.' Only then is the Mind clear and open enough to have totally new thoughts and understandings.

Nothing to Fear

There is nothing to be afraid of in the natural outcome of one's own death.

Those experiencing 'Near Death Experiences' show that the passage into death is not to be feared and when they came back they are happier and far more concerned with the welfare of others. Overall NDE's show clearly that the passage from life to death is gentle, non threatening, elevating and compared to a very concentrated meditative state, such as found in the 'formless absorptions.'

Our inner visions are very dependant to the society & culture we live in. Therefore :the Tibetan Book of the Dead” has things used and appreciated by Tibetan, but not by Western society.

Our Strongest Craving

What we fear most is annihilation of the the strongest craving we have. That of a solid, independent, eternal self. However we need gain insight into the fact that there is *nobody there to get annihilated in the first place!*

In Buddhism there are Three forms of Craving::

'To Be, To Not to Be (when depressed, suicidal etc.), and Sensual Gratification.'

Of these, 'To Be' is our strongest craving and produces Dukkha as we're craving

something that is totally impossible. This craving can never be realised. One of these days we are not going 'To Be,' and it stands to reason to let go of this, but this is easier said than done. In order to do it one has to see oneself in a totally different light.

We need investigate what we are afraid of, and if we truly investigate, nothing can happen at all.

Besides, death will happen anyway, no matter what, whether we fear it or not. Why not let go of the fear? There is no basis for this fear which, if we can live without, we can live in liberty.

A Temporary Act

We are just having a passage through this life, and are but "Guest Performers" in this world. Eventually the "show" must finish. As we're here as a guest performer we should try to provide the best "act" we can.

The problem that arises is we've usually written the script ourselves, want to be the main actor/tress, and expect all others to take only the supporting role. There are many thinking like this, which leads to enmity and conflict in the world. We need realise that our thoughts, feelings and sense of self, constantly change and that there is no permanent substance in them.

In order to totally get rid of the craving 'To Be,' we need let go of the illusion of who we are, and the misconceptions about what happens after we get rid of this illusion.

We have the misconception that once we have let go of the illusionary self, we "disappear" and become like an "inactive vegetable," not enjoying anything. It is in fact the other way around. We actually become more active and enjoy life much more than previously. This does not mean we need to stop what we are doing or change our lifestyle, but we now find we just do it differently. Outwardly things look exactly the same, but inwardly there is more of "doing for doing sake, but not for result sake." There is much loss of anxiety and stress in this, as only result thinking produces stress, not the doing.

Buddhism and many other traditions, including all Christian and Sufi mystics have talked, written about, and shown ways to get rid of, this ego illusion. If we look carefully in the back of our minds, we catch a glimmer of this insight, but the ego is much stronger and soon overrides these.

The growing realisation that the 'craving to be me,' is detrimental to our happiness, is the first step towards letting go of this illusion. The Ego makes up these myths as it just does not want to go away. The Ego says; "I don't want to go away, I have lived here many lifetimes," and the mind goes along with it.

As we look further, we will look towards our own inevitable death. If Mind says that is quite all right to die, then we need look again. The ego is opposed to death because of this strong 'Craving To Be.'

The Eternal Fearless Moment

We are all going to die this time around, but there are possibilities for acceptance and ease of mind.

People consider death degrading. Actually it is the other way around. It is form of a release and there is nothing threatening about dying to ones feeling, thoughts, and bodily functions, all of which change and "die," moment to moment, anyway. Falling asleep is "momentary death," yet most people do not feel threatened by it.

The only Reality possible to experience, is to live in the Moment. It encompasses all experience *and If we do that we will experience Eternity.*

If we live in each Moment, then we haven't made a division between what was, what will be, and what possibly is.

When we see how each moment dies, we don't have to think of all that will come or not. Living in the 'moment to moment' there is nothing to be afraid of, and if we are truly able to, it is the most wonderful and heartening experience we can have.

We are actually "dying" and "reborn" every second. Thoughts and feelings are gone in seconds, body cells constantly dissolve and rearrange themselves. There occurs continuously, a "moment to moment death" in which *each "moment to moment is a microcosm of our whole life."* If we take this to heart and 'living in this second' sinks in as a personal experience, there can be no fear of death. There is always a next moment. If we can learn through meditation to actually have our attention, one pointed on this very moment, we will experience no fear, which can be most liberating. The next second from life into death is nothing but the dissolution and separation of mind from body.

Fear of death is so widespread and ingrained because we think that is all there is, and it is strengthened by always wanting this or that, a better future etc. If we let go of this idea that there is something to gain beyond the next second, but instead just be in it, then there is nothing to fear.

We then flow with that 'Stream' that starts at birth and goes on after death. As long as we are content to flow with the "Gentle Stream", without trying to stem the flow, there is nothing to fear. If we're don't learn to live in this very moment, it is like damming the "Stream" by placing boulders in it and creating "inner turbulence."

Living our life at least in one day, from morning to night is already a big help, in reducing the fear of what comes after. Why should we worry about what comes after? There is nothing after, just this ever present Now. It is as gentle a transition as when we go asleep and wake up again in the morning.

There have always been some who have gained this insight and live differently, inside of themselves. As our thought processes become gentler we can meditate better, and as we meditate better, we have a stronger transcendental transition,

from the 'worldly to the super mundane.'

What we see as self, as boundaries, as different bodies, are all optical illusions. Transcending this can only be done by Meditation which is the bridge between the two. Less fear is already a necessary ingredient for good Meditation. With too much fear, the mind is unwilling to let go of thinking and falls into a state of inner being, where the ego has more support and power.

On the way between birth and death, we have many opportunities for deepening and widening, Spiritual Growth, our Perspective, and our Horizons. These allow us to actually live each Moment instead of thinking and fruitlessly worrying about how many years we may have left.

We learn this insight through Meditation and Mindfulness. The main point is to Practice, and to Practice Now, which can only have any effect in this Moment. We can think and think and think, and disagree, but its no substitute for the experiential.

It's got to be done if we want to experience a totally different Reality that has 'ease and flow' in it, rather than the confusing, ever changing one, that is being constantly offered to us by our own mind, and by all those around us.

Death Contemplation Meditation

Relax and place your attention on the breath for a few moments. Then say to yourself the following, and contemplate each for approximately 5 minutes. Then attend to the next one.

"I am of the Nature to Decay, I have not got beyond Decay"

Investigate whether one is concious of this or not, and whether we reject or accept it. Try to actually find the decay in the body. Has it changed over time? It's important to recognise if we have any resistance to this. Any resistance hardens the Heart, which needs to be open in order to Meditate properly and to be content.

"I am of the Nature to be Diseased, I have not got beyond Disease."

Investigate whether we've had any kind of bodily illness or physical unease, no matter how great or small. Then consider. "Did I want those diseases?" What does this tell me about the ownership of the body? Am I really its owner and in charge, and is it really me? If I am in charge then why does the body do things I disprove of?

"I am of the Nature to Die. I have not got beyond Death."

Investigate if I would be ready to Die right now, and if not, why not? Is there an underlying fear that I am unable to prevent Death? What am I afraid of? Why don't I accept Death as naturally as we accept Birth?

"All that is mine, dear and delightful, will change and vanish"

Investigate this from our own personal experience. Has much changed or even

vanished?

Can we accept the fact that, we too will change and vanish? This includes our self and all the things we hang onto. Are we willing to let go of the clinging?

"I am the owner of my Kamma."

Investigate whether we are taking full responsibility for everything that happens to us, or are we looking for outside causes? Kamma is the 'cause and effect' teaching which means everything we experience has been caused by previous intentions, whether we notice them or not. Investigate whether we're responsible or not, for the happenings in our lives?

"I am heir to my Kamma"

Investigate whether we are aware that we inherit these imprints? If we want a valuable inheritance we need to manufacture it ourselves.

"I am related to my Kamma."

It is the closest relationship we will ever have. It is as near to us as our own skin, and the one relationship that we are forced to come to terms with.

"I live supported by my Kamma."

Whatever Kamma we have made is our life support. We can look at it to see that we really have no other choices but to make good Kamma now. Our support system on every level, physical, mental, emotional, is a 'Karmic resultant.'

"Whatever Kamma I shall do, whether Good or Evil, that I shall inherit." That is an ultimatum for this particular Moment and which is the first Moment of the rest of our lives and beyond. What are my intentions in this regard?

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

From Talks: 01e & 02c

Buddhism hostile to Women?

Q: Is Buddhism hostile to women?

A: If the Buddhist teachings were hostile to anything, it would not be a spiritual practice, so this hostility would not have come from the Buddha or his teachings, but would have arisen from misinterpretation and personal prejudice.

Starting Practice when Older

Q: To one who comes to the practice late in life, what would be the essential Practice, and can one still find a great teacher?

A: It can be difficult if one has no one to relate to. Try to find teachers and others with the same interest, near to you.

Late in life it is useful and important to contemplate on the nature of decay,

disease and death, especially when one considers that as one is old, it is to be assumed that one will be dead quicker, than if younger. However even in the young, it is important to practice this. They can also die. Tombstones in cemeteries show dates of death at any age, ranging from 1hour to over 100 years.

A loving heart, and an understanding, acceptance and realisation, that death is part of life, and not a tragedy, is very helpful to smooth the passage from life to death.

Non Self or Reduction of Karmic Resultants?

Q: Is it important to decrease karmic resultants and will this get us to Nirvana quicker, or do we aim for non-self and what are the best ways of doing it?

A: Aiming for non-self awareness, leads to much reduction in Karmic resultants but they can still happen in 'heavy karma,' such as murdering ones parents.

We don't remember what we did in past lives so we need not worry about it. We practice Now!

Aiming for non-self is a fallacy as we cannot aim for something that is not there. We should rather aim to let go of ego based wishes, egocentricity, self support.

Mindfulness and its Relationship to Conciousness?

Q: Mindfulness and it's relation to Conciousness?

A: Conciousness is not exactly Mindfulness. Mindfulness means to be in this particular moment, right here and now.

Mindfulness according to the Buddha contains 4 foundations. Body, Feeling, Moods, and Content of Thought. If non-self is a content of thought, then we must be enlightened!

Craving and appreciating Beauty?

Q: Is perceiving and enjoying beauty craving?

A: It is no problem to enjoy a beautiful thing but we should get to know this automatic process, and at an opportune time change this sequence if need be.

When we get to know ourselves better we gain greater insight on what is happening within, if it could be a problem or not, and learn to rectify it. To do this we use the "Steps of the Mind."

Speed of Movements on Retreat

Q: On the Retreat I try to do all my movements slowly but others seem to be moving faster?

A: We don't do anything slowly for the sake of it. However extreme Mindfulness can result in very slowly movements. "The first Foundation of Mindfulness is

attention to all ones physical movements.” If we pay attention to this, we can move quite slowly. Regarding the others who are moving faster, we are doing this for ourselves, and how fast they move is not at all our concern.

Thangka use for Meditation?

Q: Is it helpful to Meditate with a Thangka? (A Religious, painting/tapestry. Esp Tibetan)

A: The Thangka is a useful visualisation tool if we use it in the Meditation but not by staring at it all the time! We take a good look, then what we've seen must be internalised within the Meditation.

Use of Sound for Meditation?

Q: Is it better to use sounds, such as the church bells as a Meditation object, or is it better to try to be transparent to, and have with no resistance to them, and rather try and stay on the breath?

A: Neither. Trying to stay on the breath may not work in this case. To have no resistance and be transparent to the sound, using it as a Meditation object may work by having it going right “through” you, and in so doing experience the “transparency” of the body. It can be a pleasant sensation, and may even be strong enough that its effect continues well after the sound has gone.

Love. Different qualities of

Q: Is there a difference in the quality of love towards a most beloved person, and a rose or animal?

A: Because we discriminate there certainly is a difference in quality. That’s why we have different feelings of love, and extensions of the Heart. However if we learn to use the Heart fully for loving, then ideally the quality of love that arises, should never change regardless what is before us.

Fantatising in Meditation

Q: Is it O.K. in Meditation, when following the breath, if it becomes flat and dull, to create with imagination more interesting images, or is this just the Mind constructing a false reality?

A: It is not the breath that becomes flat and dull, it is the Mind that becomes flat and dull. If this happens then change the Meditation subject to say a “Loving kindness or Contemplative” Meditation, something the Heart is closer to. Imaginary pictures and fantasies are not helpful.

Bowing, what for?

Q: Is it appropriate to Bow, especially to all and sundry? What is the meaning and symbolism of the 3 fold Bowing before and after a Meditation session?

A: It is always all right to Bow. Bowing is a measure and manifestation of humility, an essential quality on the Spiritual Path, making us aware of and to strive for, something greater than ourselves.

We bow not just to those Sangha who are monks and nuns, but to any who have become enlightened and/or are able to propagate the teachings and make them available.

We bow to the Buddha. (The Enlightenment principle.) To the Dhamma. (The Teachings) and to the Sangha. (The Enlightened ones able to propagate the teachings.) Bowing is a sign of humility, gratitude and reverence to that which is the highest ideal.

Repetitious Thoughts

Q: How do we cope with repetitious thoughts, and how do we substitute them?

A: It is best to substitute them with "Loving Kindness and Compassion," for oneself, those close, and those far. When these discursive thoughts trouble us before falling asleep, this is one of the best methods to use. With these substitutes the mind activity becomes productive and appropriate.

Types of Joy

Q: What is the difference between Spiritual and non-spiritual Joy?

A: Non spiritual joy is worldly joy, coming from 'feel good' sense inputs that are often temporary.

Spiritual Joy does not have outer conditions, but arises internally and is eternal.

Self Perception

Q: When I do 'Loving Kindnesses' for myself, I find it is often a "sad person" who is doing this. I am baffled by this 'division of self.' Where does this "Love" come from?

A: Why be unhappy about Meditation and oneself? Only if we have expectation does this occur. When we find that "bliss" hasn't occurred, that our Meditation is difficult, and has not occurred the way we want, we become miserable. What makes it worse is blaming ourselves for an unhappy Meditation. That's dukkha, as brought up in the 1st & 2nd Nobles truths. In the 1st, all existence contains dukkha, and little is totally satisfactory for long. In the 2nd, dukkha arises in all the wanting to have, or wanting to get rid of.

We need to recognise things for what they are, as they are, without judgement, blame and expectation. Just for a moment, drop the desire that things should be different. This drops the dukkha, and even if momentarily, this gives us an example of what the Buddha said is the cause for dukkha, and an inspiration for Practice.

Just looking at things the way they are, cannot produce unhappiness. Only wanting to change them, especially if we cannot, makes us unhappy. This includes wanting something from the Meditation itself. We must learn to rather concentrate and “fall” into the Meditation just as it is.

The “Love” mentioned comes from our Inner Being and past loving experiences.

“No expectation, no disappointment.” - Buddhist saying

Anger, how to cope?

Q: How to cope with strong Anger in Meditation dominating the Mind?

A: We look for the root cause, which is Fear, a sub division of Anger. Fear can only be experienced towards that which we dislike. It is embedded within the two “Mind Poisons,” 'Hate and Greed. That of wanting to have and that of wanting to get rid of. We can only fear what we hate, not what we love. Fear and Anger are essentially the same thing.

We must contemplate and enquire, “what am I afraid of?” Every answer we get will be a new question, until we get to rock bottom. Rock bottom is 'Fear of Annihilation.' It does not help to just know this, but it has to be investigated until it gets experiential. Any answer along the way is also useful.

If there is too much anger to allow us to work with it, an intermediate step is 'substitution with the opposite.' Turn the mind totally away from that which is so disturbing. (e.g. visualise a beautiful meadow, the ocean etc.) This helps gives the Mind “breathing space,” before we approach and try to deal with, the anger again.

Supreme Emotions. Their effect

Q: Are the Four Supreme Emotions (Loving Kindness, Compassion, Joy with others & Equanimity) like filters for our sense contacts, effecting the feelings that arise and our reactions and labelling?

Is Equanimity the same as neutrality?

A: Yes our reactions are guided by the Supreme Emotions.

Equanimity differs from Loving Kindness and Compassion and does not mean neutrality. It is a “Rock like” quality within oneself where the outer conditions no longer “rock” the peace.

Analytical Dangers

Q: Is there a danger of becoming too analytical with Contemplation Meditation?

A: Yes certainly. If one is used to analysing and intellectualising that can be overdone and be hindrance to our Practice. Contemplation is strictly geared towards what do I feel, why do I feel it, and what is helpful.

Inner realisation from what is upper most in the Heart does not demand reasoning. It has to be worked upon and experienced, rather than just cognitised. Similarly when reading, we have the tendency to read a book of value, then put it back in the shelf and think we already know, and have done it. We've done nothing! There is an enormous difference between what we know (which we often soon forget), and what we do. They are miles apart.

Joy in Meditation

Q: I've Meditated regularly for two years and notice positive effects. However no strong feelings of Joy or physical reactions have yet occurred. Do I need patience for this? In Meditation when we still our thoughts, is the pleasantness, and Joy arising, just relief, or are we accessing an inner natural purity?

A: Yes Patience and Perseverance. Two years is usually not enough for most people although it can be . It depends much on what 'karmic resultants' one brings to the Meditation. The type of joy arising depends entirely on where we are at in our Practice, and what we are doing at the time.

Getting Balanced Complete Teachings

Q: Only certain aspects seem to be discussed on Retreat. How might I study and practice the Buddha's teachings in a balanced and complete way?

A: On this course we are touching on all of the Buddha's teachings. These include, Morality, Concentration and Insight, which are the balanced essentials on the Buddhist Path. (Especially as they include the 4 Noble Truths and the 8 Fold Path.) Meditation needs two legs to stand upon. It has to have the support system of 'Morality/Purification' on one leg, and 'Wisdom/Insight' on the other. Connecting the two is the Meditation.

Fear of Death and Ego Resistance

Q: In the Practice of Meditation my ego is resisting insights I have gained with a strong fear of death. How can I react to all this without suppressing it?

A: Briefly, Meditation can only work and provide peacefulness if the ego support is temporarily reduced or abolished. Ego support is thinking and Ego is very afraid of it's own annihilation, which also translates as fear of death. There is no need to be afraid as it takes far more for this perceived annihilation to occur. To let go and be rid of Ego, even for a few minutes, is a lovely and unforgettable experience.

Dukkha. How to be Free of it

Q: How can beings be free from Dukkha? Do we do it by not reacting fully to pleasant or unpleasant sense contacts and experiences, and with training, then let go of these reactions?

A: To be 'free from dukkha' is a person who is free from self, which means enlightenment and total freedom. If there is "nobody" there, there is "no body" to experience the dukkha.

It is good to train to notice one's reactivity and work at letting go of these reactions.

This is about letting go of the negatives which are usually related to Hate and Greed, but not necessarily letting go of the Positive. (Greed however can be confused with the positive, as it promises fulfilment which can appear to be a positive experience.) Positive experiences, when they contain elements of "Loving Kindness" and "Compassion," must not be let go of, but nurtured.

As we grow to realise we are having dukkha because we are wanting something, we learn that once 'we drop the wanting,' we are also dropping dukkha. Even momentarily this can be beneficial.

Disrespectful Mind

Q: A part of my mind is not respectful, and makes me doubt, and makes fun of my insights.

A: Doubt is our 5th 'Hindrance' to Practice,' a feature of the Mind which will only diminish when the Meditation starts coming together. It disappears the moment, we experience, even for an instant, that the 'self' does not actually exist, and that we've been living in an illusion all along.

Important for self confidence, is not to doubt ones own ability to Practice, and it helps to start every Meditation with "Loving Kindness Meditation," which is a support system for self confidence. When we know we can react lovingly to every and anything, that comes up, confidence grows. To make fun of your insights is unusual, as an Insight is usually an "Ah Ha" experience.

Metta. Does it get to it's Target?

Q: When we send love out to others in "Metta Meditation," are we actually accessing these others, or just developing our own capacity to love?

A: We are developing our own capacity to love. However as it develops, it should reach out to others, initially to those close and then to those further away.

We can be compared to a "radio set on the right station." How others are "tuned in" and how strong our "transmitters" are, determines how the message gets across.

Anxiety and Fear in relation to Disease

Q: I have an ailment which cannot be cured medically I try to wish the body well, and with feelings of acceptance, but also react with anxiety and fear to my condition. I also try to drop the obsessive thoughts about it but worry about the dangers of suppression. Best approach?

A: Wishing the body Well and with Acceptance sounds the better way to approach this. Trying to drop the obsessive thought, which will only come up again and again, can lead to suppression.

Only growth of Insight will change the whole viewpoint and approach to the issue. We need look at the impermanence of any other 'body' and not just ours, and also not identify with this body as ours. If asked, "are you the body" we do not accept it, yet we all think we are the body.

It is much easier to realise we have no monopoly on this body, which is going to decay and eventually become debilitated and disappear.

With Insight we begin to realise that we have far more going for us than just this body. When we are able to be more accepting we become far more at ease. We begin to look at the disease and the body with more Insight and investigation, for what it is. Pain has limits and difficulties to work with however.

Grieving

Q: With the emphasis on Grieving which seems to be the trend nowadays, how does this relate for going through or expressing other emotions?

A: It is useful to be clear about what one is actually grieving about.

We must learn not to cling to what we grieve for, and to recognise that they're in the past and will never come back, no matter how much we try to arouse them. We must also know that the person that experienced these is not the same person, or in the same situation, as it was then. This is only the experience of the karmic resultants that still linger on. "Let it go. Let it be."

Every single moment is our life. The past is not our life. It was a life experience now gone, but which we continue to identify with.

An interesting and useful exercise is to look at photo of yourself as a baby, and at the same time look at yourself in mirror, and try to see the connection. There is none. You can't see or feel it. All there is, is a piece of paper!



Enso circle & Tree – Dreamstime.com

Ayya Khema
Quotes of Value from various talks

"It is often thought that the Buddha's doctrine teaches us that suffering will disappear if one has meditated long enough, or if one sees everything differently. It isn't that at all. Suffering isn't going to go away; the one who suffers is going to go away."

"Insight arrives as we get to know that, what is within us, is that which we did not know before."

"Meditation is a bridge from the Worldly, to the Transcendental."

"If we don't want to grow old we've got to die young."

"Our environment is our mirror and only mirrors who and what we are. If we look to the 'outer' as a mirror, we get to know better what is going on within."

"The Mind is a Magician. It can pull a rabbit out of any hat. When we go behind the stage, we then see that the rabbit was in the hat all the time!"

"Anybody who has ever been alive and is not alive now, is dead."

"Where there is no Re-birth, there is no Re-Death"

"Only by biting into the mango can we know what it tastes like, not by what another tells us."

"Concern with the pollution of the environment, is the least of our problems. The pollution of our emotions and thoughts is the root problem. Our inner environment is of utmost importance as it has the power to pollute or purify both our inner and outer worlds."

"When we see the way the Dhamma looks at things it usually looks at things in a totally different way, upside down 180 degrees turned around."

"Spiritual life does not happen in a temple! That is only an outward manifestation. Spiritual life does not happen on a little pillow! That is only one of the means. Spiritual life happens in our heart and mind. The Dhamma -- the teaching of the Buddha -- the Truth -- comes to life only when we ourselves manifest it."

*The Retreat was held in 1995 at a Benedictine Monastery in Bavaria, Germany.
Many of the retreat videos can be found on YouTube and are well worth watching.
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With full acknowledgement, heartfelt thanks and in memory of the late Ayya Khema*